

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Boards, Commissions, and Committees (referred to collectively as “Town commissions” have a critical role in the Town of Los Gatos. They serve as a conduit for citizen inputs a way of gathering, analyzing and recommending options to the Town Council which has the final responsibility for making policy decisions. Any citizen can come before the Town Council to offer an opinion or make a suggestion, but commissions provide another important avenue for evaluating solutions to community problems. The individuals who serve on the Town commissions are among the most respected and appreciated volunteers in the community.

The purpose of Boards, Commissions, and Committees in Los Gatos is to:

- Identify community issues that fall within their scope of work as identified in the enabling resolution.
- Gather information and analyze issues.
- Hold public hearings and use other means to determine how the community feels about issues related to their respective fields.
- Recommend policies and procedures related to their respective fields to the Town Council based on analysis and community input.
- Serve as an intermediary between the public and the Town Council and staff by providing information, explanation, and support for different points of view.
- Exemplify the mission statement of our Town government to enhance the quality of life in Los Gatos by providing the highest quality of leadership and most efficient services and facilities.

Responsibilities of Individual Members

Each member of a Town of Los Gatos board, commissions or committee agrees to the following responsibilities during his or her term of office:

- Attend every meeting
- Demonstrate respect, fairness, consideration, and courtesy to others
- Respect the authority of the chair
- Prepare in advance of meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda
- Be respectful of other people’s time, stay focused and act efficiently during meetings
- Serve as a model of leadership and inspire public confidence in Town government
- Act and speak with honesty and integrity
- Be wary of conflicts of interest, be knowledgeable of the requirements of the Brown Act, and seek advice when appropriate

Role of the chair and the vice chair

Commissions generally rotate the position of chair and vice chair each year. Frequently the position is based on seniority, but that is not a mandatory criterion. The willingness and ability of an individual to serve as the chair or vice-chair should be taken into consideration. The additional responsibilities of serving as chair and vice chair may take extra time.

Responsibilities of the chair:

- Preside at all official meetings of the board, commissions, or committee
- Consult with the staff liaison in drafting the meeting agenda
- Attend Town Council meetings as needed to represent the board, commission, or committee
- Sign correspondence on behalf of the board, commission, or committee
- Make the public feel welcome at meetings
- Keep discussions orderly, focused, efficient, impersonal, and fair

Responsibilities of the vice chair are to substitute for the chair as needed.

Responsibilities of the Staff Liaison

The Town's administrative staff works for and is accountable to the Town Manager. It is, therefore, the Town Manager's responsibility to allocate staff's time and effort as liaisons to Town boards, commissions, or committees. Requests for information or support should be directed to the staff liaison, not to other Town staff. The responsibilities of Town staff serving as liaisons include:

- Attend all meetings
- Prepare agendas in conjunction with the commission chair
- Provide background and context on agenda items
- Alert the Commission of possible detrimental actions
- Offer professional expertise and recommendations about an issue
- Keep the board, commission, or committee focused on priorities
- Interpret codes, ordinances, policies and other regulations
- Ensure that motions and minutes reflect the intent of the commission
- Educate new members about their role and responsibilities

Relationship with the Town Council

The primary responsibility of boards, commissions, and committees is to advise and make recommendations to the Town Council. It is the Council's role to absorb the advice and recommendations offered by numerous sources and to make decisions to the best of its ability. Because the Town Council is in a position to see the broader context and is aware of other concerns, it may not always follow the recommendation offered by individual boards commissions, committees. Even though the Council relies on the work of Town commissions, there should be no confusion about the separate roles of each.

Although there may be disagreement with the Town Council on an issue, once the Council has established its position, the board, commission, and committee or their individual members, should not do anything contrary to established policies and programs adopted by the Town Council. If the appointed individual would like to discuss the Council's action, they should contact the staff person responsible for their advisory body.

Business transacted with the Council should be in writing from the body as a whole and forwarded through staff who will then forward it to the Town Manager's Office. The Town Manager will review all reports, findings and recommendations and forward to the Council those matters within its province.

Letters from boards, commissions, and committees addressed to the public or other agencies and concerning official positions being taken must first be forwarded to the Town Council for approval before being mailed. Letters from individual board, commission, or committee members to either the public or the media regarding issues that are within the jurisdiction of that board, commission, or committee should be distributed to the other members and the Council as a matter of courtesy.

When a member of an advisory body addresses the Town Council at a public meeting, it should be made clear whether the member is speaking on behalf of the advisory body or as an individual citizen.

Boards, commissions, and committees and their individual members should not attempt to predict Council action, either publicly or privately. However, they may, and should, interpret Council policies or identify trends in Council thinking.

Relationship with the Public

Members are encouraged to become aware of public opinion relating to their field of influence. They should welcome citizen input at meetings and ensure that the rules and procedures for these public hearings are clearly understood.

Members should conduct themselves at public meetings in a manner that is fair, understanding and gracious. Members should be considerate of all interests, attitudes and differences of opinion. They should also take care to observe the appearance as well as the principle of impartiality.

All Town employees, Council members, and Town volunteers, including commission, committee, and board members, are prohibited from accepting gifts, gratuities, or favors. Acceptance of any gift, gratuity, or favor might reasonably be interpreted as an attempt to influence the recipient's actions. See the complete Administrative Policy online.

Area of Interest

The specific duties of each commission are set forth in the enabling resolution that Council adopts to create the commission. It is implicitly understood that the advisory body is limited to the consideration of those matters which are specifically assigned to its jurisdiction. In special or unusual circumstances, when interest spreads into an area beyond its jurisdiction, the commission should formally request specific authorization from the Council to consider the matter and to formulate recommendations in that area.

Conflict of Interest

The State of California requires all Cities and Towns to adopt a "conflict of interest" ordinance. The Town of Los Gatos has adopted an ordinance to meet the State requirements and has indicated that all Commission, Board or Committee members must file the Fair Political Practices Commission Form 700 with the Clerk. Members should also remain wary of potential conflicts of interest and seek advice as appropriate (more information online.)

Term of Office

A commissioner's term of office officially begins when the new member takes the Oath of Office, administered by the Clerk Administrator, and expires when their term expires and their successor is appointed. The term of office for each commission can be found in the commission's enabling resolution.

Attendance

Attendance at each regular meeting of a board, commission, or committee is essential. If a commissioner knows in advance that he/she will be absent from a meeting, he/she should inform his/her commission chair or staff liaison. Resolutions online outline the attendance requirements for each commission.

Residency Requirement

Residency in the Town of Los Gatos is required for appointment and continued membership on the following commissions: Arts Commission, Community Services Commission, Library Board, Sister City Committee, and Planning Commission. Certain commissions may require residency for certain members of the commission, while other membership may involve business or property ownership, or other community representation, but not legal residency. See Residency Requirements Resolution online.

Resignation

A commission member resigning from office before the end of his/her term must send a letter announcing their resignation to the Mayor. Copies will be forwarded to the Town Council, and the board, commission, or committee.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Prior approval from staff must be received before a commission member may purchase an item for the benefit of that commission, committee or board for a Town-sponsored activity or event. A receipt for that item(s) must be submitted before the member may be reimbursed. (See Resolutions online.)

A resolution entitled, "Reimbursement of Expenses", explains reimbursement policy for attendance at governmental business functions.